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ABSTRACT

Rules for the development and application of audiovisual material are constantly being redesigned whether one is concerned with technological aspects, economic and policy structures, social impact, or media practice. This paper outlines the work being done by the International Media Literacy Project at the Royal University of London. The project is involved in the fundamental activities of audiovisual composition, but it also investigates ways in which the scope of various media is expanding, like new techniques of image manipulation. It has also been useful for participants to examine the relationship between communicative purposes and the evolution of audiovisual composition and professional media practices. Another job of the International Media Literacy Project has been to explore whether any international compositional forms are developing, and whether they are due to indigenous language, culture, and art. Much of this project research involves global collaborative research comparing how audiovisual composition occurs in different cultural and language settings. This work could provide a framework for devising appropriate strategies for meeting the information needs of the future. (BEW)

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ED 393 416

IN SEARCH OF AN AUDIO VISUAL COMPOSING PROCESS

by
Carol Lorac

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For those of us working within the area of audio visual media, it is rather like riding a roller coaster which is constantly being up-dated, redesigned, and with no consciously defined sense of direction.

Whether you are concerned with:

1. Technological development (and this effects every aspect of our work to some extent--long before the applications or effects can be appreciated, understood, and disseminated the technological wizards have moved on!

2. Economic structures, policy frameworks, or organizational practices--blink, and the rules have changed!

3. Impact on social behavior or cultural values--are the magicians in the consciousness production factory subverting reality with illusion?

4. Media practice--are the potentially diverse audio visual composing processes being dominated by the imagicians of the global tongue?

We may be grateful to discover that riding a roller coaster presents us with the possibility of two existences. The one outside which moves past so fast it remains by and large a fairly blurred sensation and the one inside whereby you try to focus on the place you have selected and attempt to make some sort of sense of it, however slow the progress seems against the speed of everything surrounding you.

This paper briefly describes the work of the International Media Literacy Project which is based at Royal University of London, U.K., and is cooperating with universities and colleges internationally. The International Media Literacy Project developed an evolving audio visual communication system and the relationship of this to the teaching of media practice in universities and colleges.

Clearly, the emergence and development of audio visual texts on television and video owe much to the pioneering endeavors of prior audio visual communication systems, namely film and radio. Indeed, the fundamental activities involved in audio visual composing processes which embrace filmic and televisual composition are the main focus of the International Media Literacy Project. However, it is pertinent to consider the specific developments inherent in television, and in particular video, because this provides an opportunity for examining how these audio visual media have extended the scope of audio visual communication systems in a number of significant ways.

The relatively recent extension of expression through audio visual communication systems, by the introduction of television and then video, has been predominantly determined by the television broadcasters and video producers in the large audio visual publishing houses. They have been developing specific types of production processes for the creation of particular kinds of media texts. This has been in response to the gradual realization of the potential for audio visual communication to cover ever more areas. The result has been the production of a whole new range of audio visual genres. Another factor has been the developing audio visual technologies which have enabled new forms of image manipulation, and through this, new types of production values and audio visual compositional possibilities.

In this environment of continually evolving production processes, it has been useful to establish the relationship between

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professional media practices and communicative purposes. This has provided a way of understanding how audio visual communication systems, developed by the publishing houses, are operating. Clearly, their specific purposes have influenced the ways in which they have developed and used audio visual composing processes.

Looking at the evolution of audio visual composing processes in this way, it might be fitting to signal that when the purposes for audio visual communication are extended beyond the present publishing interests then it is likely that other audio visual formulations will need to be developed. This might indicate that a more broadly based approach to the teaching of audio visual composing processes may be relevant in preparing students as audio visual communicators.

The linking of audio visual media to computer technology will mean a more integrated audio, visual, and print communications system in the future. The International Media Literacy Project has been bearing this in mind as it has been exploring the possible ways of approaching the teaching of audio visual composition in the twenty-first century.

The increase in multi-national production and marketing strategies for television and video, and the implications implicit from the development of satellite system, has produced an international audio visual communication network and, therefore, audience. The International Media Literacy Project has been exploring whether indigenous languages and cultures, and visual and performing arts, have an influence on the media texts being created from a diversity of backgrounds; or whether the influence of global transmission of dominant audio visual compositional forms have produced an international form.

The evolution of an audio visual composing process which might have international multi-cultural roots will need to be considered in light of the developing patterns of other media--architecture, painting, and music. Clearly, the international skyline, city, motorway, airport, or shopping area have homogenized once culturally distinct architectural forms. Modern painters will often have an international *look* rather than being very nationally specific. Popular music certainly contains international sounds and is now an international phenomena. Questions reflecting the national/international debates surrounding cultural identity in a global communication era are being addressed.

The International Media Literacy Project has been developing a programme of activity which may provide ways of understanding how audio visual composition occurs in different cultural and language settings. The results of this may shed light on the role that audio visual communication might play in a range of new applications.

The international programme of activity involves teachers of media practitioners and audio visual communicators, from a large cross section of continents, collaborating on a joint piece of research which will provide extensive documentation on the ways in which they teach media practice and in particular audio visual composition. The participants from each country are providing three sets of materials: examples and extracts from national film and television output, case studies of their practical teaching strategies, and examples of their students video texts.

The compilations of extracts from national film and television output will be selected on the basis of attempting to identify a particular national *look*. This *look* may be a particularly visual phenomenon, or may be achieved by the use of specific movement or rhythm, or by some other factor altogether. Comparative analyses may produce some identification of key elements which might in turn be related in some way to a diversity of cultural visual imaging, languaging, and drama, or music.

The international case studies on teaching media practice should provide the opportunity of seeing whether there are similar general patterns, and particular individual difference, in the process of audio visual composition. Comparing these case studies will enable a cross-cultural enquiry, as well as an opportunity of identifying basic elements, in an audio visual composing process. It should also provide access to differing approaches to the teaching of audio visual composition.

In addition, examples of set assignments will be given to students and the resulting video texts will be examined to provide insights into the relationship between different kinds of audio visual teaching and the unfolding audio visual compositional forms developed by media students.

The Media Literacy Project has been looking at the audio visual composing process by examining its compositional elements. The current approach has been to look at the visual and performing arts, their relationship to human communication and the ways which their vocabularies are used within audio visual composing processes. Not only has this perspective provided a framework for looking at an audio visual communication system as a means of developing an intelligence of feeling (because of the role played by the effective domain in the expressive systems of the arts), but it has also provided a way of presenting an innovative framework for teaching media practice.

Furthermore, the results of this research programme may illuminate questions pertaining to the cultural influence on audio visual composition. We may discover specific national, cultural, and language differences or the notion of an international audio visual compositional process (which may have much to do with innate aspects of seeing, hearing, and thinking than with the global capacities of the audio visual technologies) may be reinforced.

It is hoped that by tapping into the expansion of new media programmes, within the higher education system, which have included the teaching of media practice, that it is now possible to provide information on the nature of audio visual composition--the theories underpinning the art of media practice, methodologies for teaching audio visual composition, and the relationship between teaching strategies and the acquisition and use of an audio visual communication system. This information could provide the framework for developing appropriate strategies for meeting the needs of new applications for media communication in the future.